

THE COLONIAL NEWSLETTER

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Our first issue was received rather well and we have received quite a few comments — all favorable.

Please remember that this is not a commercial venture and its continuance depends upon your acceptance and *active* participation. Write-ups and significant photos of mutual interest are needed periodically. Articles need not be profound or lengthy but a 100% participation is essential. May we also request our active supporters to send a little money. Contributions of any size will be appreciated. All money received will be used to perpetuate the *Colonial Newsletter*.

Requests have been received for subscriptions from non-specialists. I feel that subscriptions are not feasible at this time for the following reasons: (1) the subscription rate would be high due to the inclusion of plates (2) the content of the newsletter would not be properly appreciated (3) these individuals would be unable to submit an occasional technical write-up or comment and (4) the practice of selling subscriptions would, in effect, reduce the obligation of our present supporters to contribute material for publication. These are merely one person's thoughts; what are yours?

We may occasionally print something with which you disagree. If this occurs please let us print your views. Unchallenged errors or unchallengeable statements should not exist here if at all possible. And most important, don't be apathetic; if you are interested in this thing support it! If you are not, let us know that too.

A. D. Hoch, Editor

LETTERS

Dear Al:

The Colonial Newsletter arrived today. It was every bit as good as you predicted and I want to offer you my sincerest congratulations for doing such a fine job. Your idea of including actual photographic plates is excellent. I am sure that everyone who has the opportunity to receive

this publication will find it of value to them in many ways.

Your editorial pointed out that you need the support of the people who will be receiving this Newsletter. I can readily understand that you will need contributions in the way of articles, comments and writeups for each issue. I am also certain that you will need contributions of money as well in order to continue the high quality of your Newsletter.

Enclosed is a check to help cover my share in this project. If everyone who receives the letter will contribute something according to the interest that they have in the magazine, I am sure that you will be able to continue publishing it each month.

Once again, congratulations on the first issue, best wishes for continued success and here's hoping that all interested parties will help you with contributions of both articles and financial support.

Ken Bressett
Numismatic Editor
Whitman Publishing Company

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Letter to the Editor:

I would like to make a clarification on the Nelson numbering given in "The Hibernia-Voce Populi Coinage of 1760" in the October issue.

The numbers given are the numbers shown on Nelson's Plate V which are not the same as the variety numbers. Therefore, the reference to Nelson No. 10 should be termed Nelson No. 6, which is No. 10 on Plate V, and Nelson No. 9 would be termed Nelson No. 2, which is No. 9 on Plate V.

I know of eight specimens of the 1760 Nelson No. 6.

I might also add that there are now 15 known die combinations of the 1760 Voce Populi Halfpenny.

W. P. Keller

* * *

Colonial Newsletter Editor:

Please keep me on your mailing list. I think this is a fine idea and will be

glad to submit new discoveries as they turn up. Right now I can only report that another Fugio 19-SS has appeared along with another 1787 Mass. cent, 4-J (the first was found by Dave Bowers and photographs can be had from him); both of these turned up on the west coast. Eventually some kind of census will be necessary on these series.

I have no doubt whatever that the "1700" Voce Populi coins were blundered. Possibly their maker, whoever he was, did not possess a 6 punch. I know of more than one reverse die showing the alterations to 6 from 0. Such coins are very easy to spot—the circle of the 6 is the same size and shape as the adjacent 0, a feature altogether different from other Voce Populi halfpence. Most of the latter, in fact seem to have engraved rather than punched-in numerals. Comparison of letter punches among the different varieties should afford conclusive evidence as to whether a single manufacturer or several were involved. (Are you listening, Bob Vlack?)

Beaudreau's 15-M Massachusetts cent is not new. I know of two other specimens besides his. One of them is in Extremely Fine condition. Check with Dave Bowers. And as though there were not already enough confusion, three other not-in-Ryder obverses have turned up, all with reverse M of 1788. That called "16" is Crosby's 9, with bottom of bow double cut, but it is altogether different from Ryder's 9. Worse yet, I have never seen a specimen of what Ryder calls 7-M and none of the known dies exactly match the Ryder description of "7" (which derived from that of Crosby). This is why no book on Massachusetts copper will be ready for a while—too many recorded varieties have dropped out of sight, like the 1788 5-H, 7-M, 12-H, and the piece in the Bushnell sale called "11-G." W. P. Keller has something that might conceivably qualify as 12-H, but the reverse differs from both the Crosby and Ryder descriptions in minor details. Incidentally, the 15-M is very easily identified by a marked tuft of grass above the Indian's toe (at observer's left), which is not found on obverse 12, its nearest relative.

The "D" Church Penny has been recorded before, but I know of no other specimen; and in fact the regular Church Penny is one of the rarest of all Colonial coppers. One of each appeared in the W. Elliot Woodward sale of April 1863,

lots 2079 and 2080, this being apparently the earliest mention of either. The "D" piece in the Mass. Historical Society seems to have been this original Woodward coin, via Bushnell.

Walter Breen

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... Since writing I can report two new discoveries: another Fugio 19-SS and a Mass. cent, 1787 4-J. Both of these are better in some ways than the previously known specimens, particularly the former...

Walter Breen

Re Mr. Greco's Church Penny: As far as I know *all* these coins have a "D" above the word "CHURCH".

Damia T. Francis

If anyone has a Church Penny without the "D" a photo of it for the Newsletter would be welcome.—Ed.

I can report the discovery of a new muling of 1787 Massachusetts Half Cent, the first in over 40 years. The obverse 4 combined with the reverse D. Unfortunately, the coin is holed. It is considered unique.

Phil Greco

Of interest is some new data and combinations of Connecticut Cents not noted in the original Miller-Ryder nor generally known from past efforts of correction:

1785 add: 3(1)-F(3)

1787 add: 32(4)-Z(20), 32(4)-F,

33(21)-k(4), 33(21)-EE

1788 15(3)-P doesn't exist. It was represented by only the Canfield specimen at ANS, which was too worn to see the 1st period. It is actually a new variety of obverse 16, and should be known as 16(7)-P. It is the same obverse die as 32(5) of 1787.

Richard Picker

ANOTHER 1788 MASSACHUSETTS CENT—THE 12-O

While examining an unattributed lot of Massachusetts coppers in October, 1951, I found a 1788 cent with an unlisted reverse. Following Ryder's system this is designated Reverse "O" and is found in

combination with Obverse "12".

Reverse "O" is identified by the following characteristics:

Upper stroke of dash—Heavy

M&S from tip of wing—M 5/8 below
S 1/2 below

Number of barbed arrows—7 medium

Total number of arrows—12

Figures of date—Wide

Form of "S"—S (Callender die)

I am not aware of any other specimen.

W. P. Keller

A REDISCOVERED 1788 MASSACHUSETTS CENT

In 1952, I received a 1788 Massachusetts cent with an obverse not given by Ryder in combination with Reverse "M".

Later, while reading Crosby's *The Early Coins of America* I noted his comment on page 250 that the lower point of the bow on No. 9 is slightly double. This coin had that same unusual feature. On checking Crosby's table on page 248 it soon became apparent that his No. 9 and Ryder's were *not* the same. My coin matched Crosby's description and was, therefore, a Crosby No. 9-M or following the Ryder numbering is now called Ryder No. 16-M.

The identifying characteristics of Ryder No. 16 (Crosby No. 9) are:

Top of bow—1/2 height of "N", distant (Very close on Ryder No. 9)

Bottom of bow—Double; above and slightly left of foot.

Ray of star points—One at forehead; another below collar.

Butt of arrow under—Left part of "E"

Point of arrow below tunic—1-1/2 arrow head lengths

Letters "EA"—Close. (On Ryder No. 9 they are wide)

It is difficult to understand why Ryder missed this variety since Crosby specifically mentioned the double bow end which occurs on no other variety. It could be that he did not have an adequate specimen for examination and thought it to be the same. His 9-M plate coin is quite worn (as is mine also). Whether this is characteristic of all Ryder 9-M's I do not know.

I am aware of four specimens of the 16-M, one of these being in the ANS collection. Crosby rated it as a Rarity 5.

W. P. Keller

Is a Bolen Copy (seems pewter) of the Higley—a scarce piece?

Is there any data available on the gilding of the Washington-Large Eagle? I have a nice one that the plate is about 30% gone.

Richard A. Parker

In the first issue of the *Colonial Newsletter* I was especially interested in the article on the Albany Church Penny. I suggest that "D" stands for denarius, Latin for penny, used in a Greek form in the New Testament. The use of metal tickets to give people who were eligible admission to communion was widely prevalent in Presbyterian churches—there are hundreds of varieties from Scotland, and many from Canada. However, the use of ecclesiastical tokens is by no means confined to one sect or a few countries. In France and the Netherlands such pieces were distributed to persons paid for attending church—choir singers, and persons who attended memorial services for persons who had established foundations. These pieces were later redeemed for coin of the realm, and also had immediate circulation among tradesmen. The technical name is Méreau, plural Méreaux. The church authorities at Albany were following a good numismatic tradition in the issue.

Thomas Ollive Mabbott
Hunter College, N.Y.C.

AUTHORIZED WEIGHTS OF EARLY AMERICAN COPPERS

The great collectors of Early American coins several generations ago kept careful notation of the weights of their specimens, but in more recent years this tendency to record individual weights seems to have been discarded in the mad rush to collect quantity rather than study detail. Fortunately however, the scientific approach is now returning, and interest among numismatic students in conclusions to be drawn from weighing is definitely increasing.

In order to make it easier to compare the official weights established for the several state coinages with the coppers themselves, the writer has assembled the following compendium as a quick reference guide. The progressive increase in the official coin weights due to depreciation in the price of metallic copper, from 1785 onward, is quite apparent from this study.



Vermont; 111 grains.

On June 15, 1785 the Assembly granted to Reuben Harmon, Jr., a coinage franchise, which specified that "all Coppers by him coined, shall be in pieces of one third of an ounce, Troy weight each", i.e., 160 grains. It is doubtful, however, if any coins were actually struck to these weight specifications, because it was soon discovered that the same "exceed in weight the Copper Coins used in the United States of America". Although Vermont was at that time a politically independent State, for obvious economic reasons its copper circulating medium had to be strictly competitive with the British halfpence, both regal and counterfeit, which were then circulating in the neighboring areas of the Colony of Quebec, and the States of New York, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. Consequently, after only four months, the Assembly passed an amending Act, October 27, 1785, to reduce the authorized weight to "not less than four pennyweight fifteen grains each", i.e., 111 grains. This amounted to a weight reduction of 30%, and it was on this new basis that all the official Vermont coppers were subsequently struck.

Connecticut; 144 grains.

In that very same month that Vermont established its new standard at 111 grains, Connecticut issued a franchise to certain individuals to coin coppers 30% heavier. The Act of October 20, 1785 stated that Connecticut coinage should maintain "the Standard of Brittish half pence, to weigh Six penny weights", i.e., 144 grains.

New Jersey; 150 grains.

Seven months later, New Jersey authorized its own copper, the same to be 4% heavier than that of Connecticut. These coppers sanctioned by the franchise Act of June 1, 1786 were to be "of the Weight of six Pennyweights and six Grains", i.e., 150 grains.

Massachusetts; 157½ grains.

The last State to issue coppers under the Articles of Confederation also increased their coinage weight over that of other State issues, this time by 5%. Massachusetts established its State mint, October 17, 1786, at which "all the Coin that shall be struck therein, shall be of the same weight, alloy and value and each piece bear the same name, as is by the said Resolve of Congress fixed & established." This Resolve of Congress, August 8, 1786, had specified "That two pounds

and a quarter avoirdupoise weight of copper, shall constitute one hundred cents", i.e., one cent would consequently weigh 157½ grains. (This was likewise the theoretical weight of the Fugio Cent.) The Articles of Confederation which had been in effect since March 1, 1781 had provided that only the Congress had "sole and exclusive right and power of regulating the alloy and value of coin struck by their own authority, or by that of the respective states." Therefore, Massachusetts, in order to avoid any possible future revaluation of her coppers by the Congress, was very careful to require that they should match exactly the federal standard set August 8, 1786. Massachusetts even stamped its coppers with the word "Cent" and "Half Cent" to avoid misunderstanding as to their legal value. None of the other States could do this, because all of their enabling acts had been passed prior to the aforementioned Congressional Resolve of August 8, 1786.

Mint Issue Large Cents; 208 grains,
168 grains.

When the Congress established our present mint by Act of April 2, 1792, it determined that the cent should "contain eleven penny-weights of copper", i.e., 264 grains; however, no coins of this magnitude were ever emitted. On January 14, 1793 a special Act was passed to reduce the weight of the cent to the more realistic figure of 208 grains, and Large Cents were presumably struck according to this standard from 1793 through 1795. A later Act, March 3, 1795, empowered the President to further reduce the weights of the copper coinage, "Provided, such reduction shall not, in the whole, exceed two pennyweight in each cent." The President was also required to "give notice by proclamation" if he desired to exercise his prerogative and make such a change. So President Washington after some nine months consideration, having authority to order a reduction of up to 48 grains, chose in December, 1795, to reduce the weight of the Large Cent by 40 grains, or about 20%, to a new weight of 168 grains. The required Presidential Proclamation announcing the reduction was dated January 26, 1796, and from thence forward 168 grains continued to be the authorized weight of the Large Cent until the series was finally abolished by Act of Congress, approved February 21, 1857.

Edward R. Barnsley



Ryder # 12 - (O)



Ryder # 16 - (M) Crosby # 9 - (M)



Ryder # (12) - O



Ryder # (16) - M Crosby # (9) - M